

Vietnam Reorganizes as the World Watches

Washington's Role in Saigon Coup Hot Issue; Effect on New Regime Pondered

By NICOLAS RIVERO

Will the new South Vietnamese civilian regime installed in Saigon by General Doung Van Minh be able to unite the country and prosecute the war against the communist Vietcong guerrillas effectively?

That is the big question in Washington. The Kennedy Administration is confident the new regime would greatly improve the chance of

victory over the communist-led guerrillas in South Vietnam. General Doung Van Minh, who led the coup, is a 47-year-old veteran of the anti-communist war against the Vietcong who was removed by the late President Diem when his victories brought him into national prominence. He is a Buddhist and has long been highly regarded by U.S. military leaders who put him through a course at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Furthermore, almost all of the major military leaders in the country seemed to be behind General Minh's coup. Dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war and with the Diem regime's relations with the military had been widespread among the Vietnamese commanders.

Perhaps even more important was the possibility that the new regime would have more active support of the Vietnamese people. The Vietcong, relying heavily on infiltration and subversion, has thrived on discontent and disaffection among the South's impoverished millions.

It is an acknowledged fact that Ngo Dinh's personal favorites have been given influential civil and military posts and that many of his appointees in the provinces down to the village level have been corrupt.

So hundreds of thousands of peasants turned to the Vietcong.

Weapon of Fear

Many did so out of fear, since it was obvious that the central government in Saigon was unable to protect them from threats, extortions and assassinations by the guerrillas. Others supported the Vietcong, who never advertise themselves as communists or communists sympathizers, as the only alternative at hand to unacceptable rule.

Along with all this was Diem's crackdown on the Buddhists. Pagodas were seized and closed, hundreds of Buddhist priests were arrested along with large numbers of students who demonstrated in

sympathy with them. And Buddhist bonzes, or priests, incinerated themselves.

Washington began to have grave doubts about the usefulness of the Diem regime in the fight to stem communism in South East Asia. When the Buddhist crisis last summer precipitated civil strife, Washington began to discuss the possibility of a military coup to remove the Diem regime.

Though U.S. officials denied any complicity in the Saigon coup, it is a fact that Washington helped create the stage for the military take-over.

President Kennedy and his aides had openly condemned the Diem regime for its repression of Buddhists, students and other dissidents. They dissociated themselves from its domestic policy. On one occasion, President Kennedy publicly called for reforms in Saigon and expressed the belief that the war against the communist guerrillas in Vietnam could not be won unless the Diem regime regained the support of its people "with changes in policy and perhaps with personnel."

The Kennedy administration later backed away from this virtual invitation to insurrection, but in Saigon the new American Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, continued to give vigorous expression to Washington's hostility.

He asked President Diem to dismiss his all-powerful brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, who led the attacks against the Buddhists.

U.S. Role

This intervention was not undertaken lightly and not without dissent in the Administration. Some military men and the heads of the Central Intelligence Agency, both in Washington and Saigon, were against the military coup. They argued that Washington's only legitimate concern was for the war against the communist guerrillas in the deltas and hills of South Vietnam. With massive military assistance and the commitments of 16,500 American troops, they contended, the war could be won.



—UPI Photo

VIETNAM'S President Ngo Dinh Diem, who was deposed and executed.

ed—despite, and perhaps because of, Ngo Dinh Diem's rule.

But the State Department and Ambassador Lodge came to a different conclusion. They acknowledged that the war was going reasonably well, but voiced stronger doubts that it could never be won in alliance with a demonstrably unpopular regime in South Vietnam and abroad. The Roman Catholic regime of the Ngo Dinh family was strongly despised in pro-Western Thailand and in Cambodia and Burma which are also countries where 75 per cent of the population are Buddhists.

There is little doubt United States pressures encouraged dissident elements in Saigon. Moscow has already accused the United States of engineering the coup. Izvestia, the Soviet government official newspaper, said that Washington had undoubtedly engineered the coup and the decision had probably been taken after the return of President Kennedy's fact finders, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and General Maxwell D. Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The Critics

Echoing a point of view expressed repeatedly in the past by the Soviet government a commentator of Tass, the official Soviet press agency, Igor Orlov, said that only a withdrawal by the United States could bring a normal situation in South Vietnam. A similar charge was made by the communist regime of North Vietnam.



—UPI Photo

NGO DINH NHU, Diem's brother and chief political adviser, was also executed.

which is supporting the Vietcong guerrillas waging war in the South.

Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu charged that United States incited and supported the revolt which ended with the death of her husband and his brother-in-law, President Diem, who were reportedly assassinated while in the custody of revolutionary military forces in Saigon.

The assassination of President Diem and his brother Nhu did not help the moral position of the new regime. High United States officials expressed regret for the murders of the Ngo Dinh brothers, but said that Washington will not and cannot be expected to accept any responsibility for the tragic event.

The violent death of the President and his brother will undoubtedly complicate the task of the new ruler to unite the country and prosecute effectively the war against communism in that country which is the key to the Indo-Chinese peninsula and thus to the whole of Southeast Asia.

Big Find For Little Castle

Archaeologists working at the Tower of London have discovered traces of the massive earthwork fort built there by William the Conqueror nine hundred years ago. The discovery has been confirmed by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works as beyond doubt a part of the Parvum Castellum, or little castle, which William built in 1066, the year of the Norman Conquest.